

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE DISTRICT OF SOUTH CAROLINA

Terrance Donell Woodruff,)	C/A No.: 1:11-2967-CMC-SVH
)	
Plaintiff,)	
)	
vs.)	
)	REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION
Lt. Hambrick; State Department of)	
Corrections,)	
)	
Defendants.)	
)	

Plaintiff, proceeding *pro se* and *in forma pauperis*, is an inmate incarcerated at Allendale Correctional Institution alleging violations of 42 U.S.C. § 1983. Pursuant to the provisions of 28 U.S.C. § 636(b) and Local Civil Rule 73.02(B)(2)(d) (D.S.C.), the undersigned is authorized to review such complaints for relief and submit findings and recommendations to the district judge. For the reasons that follow, the undersigned recommends that the district judge dismiss defendant State Department of Corrections (“SCDOC”) without prejudice and without issuance and service of process. In a separately-docketed order, the undersigned has authorized service against defendant Hambrick.

I. Factual and Procedural Background

Plaintiff alleges he was transported to Broad River Correctional Institution (“BRCI”) from Manning Correctional Institution (“MCI”) on August 17, 2011. Compl. at 3 [Entry #1]. According to the complaint, upon arrival at BRCI, defendant Hambrick announced that inmates would not be permitted to use the restroom and would be written

up and denied parole if they were too loud. *Id.* Plaintiff asked defendant Hambrick for permission to use the restroom, explaining that he takes medication which causes him to urinate frequently. *Id.* Plaintiff alleges that when it was his turn, he mistakenly headed to the wrong restroom. *Id.* He alleges Defendant Hambrick “turned him around” and placed him in a holding cell with no toilet. *Id.* Plaintiff again asked permission to use the bathroom and was told that he would receive a disciplinary write up if he urinated on the floor. *Id.* Plaintiff urinated on himself and was finally taken to a restroom by another officer twenty minutes later. *Id.* at 3–4. Plaintiff was given restroom breaks thereafter. *Id.* at 4. Plaintiff states that he was later transferred back to MCI and alleges defendant Hambrick “interfered” with his parole. *Id.* at 4. No specific factual allegations are made against defendant SCDOC.

II. Discussion

A. Standard of Review

Plaintiff filed this Complaint pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915, which permits an indigent litigant to commence an action in federal court without prepaying the administrative costs of proceeding with the lawsuit. To protect against possible abuses of this privilege, the statute allows a district court to dismiss the case upon a finding that the action fails to state a claim on which relief may be granted or is frivolous or malicious. 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B)(i), (ii). A finding of frivolity can be made where the complaint lacks an arguable basis either in law or in fact. *Denton v. Hernandez*, 504 U.S. 25, 31

(1992). A claim based on a meritless legal theory may be dismissed *sua sponte* under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B). *See Neitzke v. Williams*, 490 U.S. 319, 327 (1989).

Pro se complaints are held to a less stringent standard than those drafted by attorneys. *Gordon v. Leeke*, 574 F.2d 1147, 1151 (4th Cir. 1978). A federal court is charged with liberally construing a complaint filed by a *pro se* litigant to allow the development of a potentially meritorious case. *Erickson v. Pardus*, 551 U.S. 89, 94 (2007). When a federal court is evaluating a *pro se* complaint, the plaintiff's allegations are assumed to be true. *Fine v. City of N. Y.*, 529 F.2d 70, 74 (2d Cir. 1975). The mandated liberal construction afforded to *pro se* pleadings means that if the court can reasonably read the pleadings to state a valid claim on which the plaintiff could prevail, it should do so. Nevertheless, the requirement of liberal construction does not mean that the court can ignore a clear failure in the pleading to allege facts which set forth a claim currently cognizable in a federal district court. *Weller v. Dep't of Soc. Servs.*, 901 F.2d 387, 390–91 (4th Cir. 1990).

B. Analysis

To state a claim under 42 U.S.C. §1983, a plaintiff must allege two essential elements: (1) that a right secured by the Constitution or laws of the United States was violated, and (2) that the alleged violation was committed by a person acting under the color of state law. *West v. Atkins*, 487 U.S. 42, 48 (1988). While the Complaint provides sufficient factual information to withstand summary dismissal against Defendant Hambrick, Plaintiff's claims against defendant SCDOC are barred by Eleventh

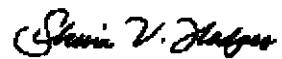
Amendment immunity. The Eleventh Amendment forbids a federal court from rendering a judgment against an unconsenting state in favor of a citizen of that state. *Edelman v. Jordan*, 415 U. S. 651, 663 (1974). Although this language does not explicitly prohibit a citizen of a state from suing his own state in federal court, the Supreme Court in *Hans v. Louisiana*, 134 U. S. 1 (1890), held that the purposes of the Eleventh Amendment, i.e. protection of a state treasury, would not be served if a state could be sued by its citizens in federal court. The Eleventh Amendment also bars this court from granting injunctive relief against the state. *See Seminole Tribe of Florida v. Florida*, 517 U.S. 44, 58 (1996) (“[T]he relief sought by a plaintiff suing a State is irrelevant to the question whether the suit is barred by the Eleventh Amendment.”). *See also Alabama v. Pugh*, 438 U. S. 781 (1978). State agencies and state instrumentalities, such as the State Department of Corrections, share this immunity when they are the alter egos of the state. *See Regents of the University of California v. Doe*, 519 U.S. 425, 429 (1997). As the SCDOC is protected from Plaintiff’s § 1983 claims by Eleventh Amendment immunity, the undersigned recommends the SCDOC be summarily dismissed.¹

¹ While the United States Congress can override Eleventh Amendment immunity through legislation, Congress has not overridden the states’ Eleventh Amendment immunity in § 1983 cases. *See Quern v. Jordan*, 440 U. S. 332, 343 (1979). In addition, a state may consent to a suit in a federal district court. *See Pennhurst State School & Hospital v. Halderman*, 465 U.S. 89, 99 & n. 9 (1984). However, the State of South Carolina has not consented to such actions. *See S.C. Code Ann. § 15-78-20(e)*.

III. Conclusion

For the foregoing reasons, it is recommended that defendant State Department of Corrections be dismissed from this case without prejudice and without issuance and service of process.

IT IS SO RECOMMENDED.



January 4, 2012
Columbia, South Carolina

Shiva V. Hodges
United States Magistrate Judge

**The parties are directed to note the important information in the attached
“Notice of Right to File Objections to Report and Recommendation.”**

Notice of Right to File Objections to Report and Recommendation

Plaintiff is advised that he may file specific written objections to this Report and Recommendation with the District Judge. **Objections must specifically identify the portions of the Report and Recommendation to which objections are made and the basis for such objections.** “[I]n the absence of a timely filed objection, a district court need not conduct a de novo review, but instead must ‘only satisfy itself that there is no clear error on the face of the record in order to accept the recommendation.’” *Diamond v. Colonial Life & Acc. Ins. Co.*, 416 F.3d 310 (4th Cir. 2005) (quoting Fed. R. Civ. P. 72 advisory committee’s note).

Specific written objections must be filed within fourteen (14) days of the date of service of this Report and Recommendation. 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1); Fed. R. Civ. P. 72(b); *see* Fed. R. Civ. P. 6(a), (d). Filing by mail pursuant to Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 5 may be accomplished by mailing objections to:

**Larry W. Propes, Clerk of Court
United States District Court
901 Richland Street
Columbia, South Carolina 29201**

Failure to timely file specific written objections to this Report and Recommendation will result in waiver of the right to appeal from a judgment of the District Court based upon such Recommendation. 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1); *Thomas v. Arn*, 474 U.S. 140 (1985); *Wright v. Collins*, 766 F.2d 841 (4th Cir. 1985); *United States v. Schronce*, 727 F.2d 91 (4th Cir. 1984).